

A Canadian dealer finds U.S. coin die

By Roger Boye

A Canadian coin dealer has yet to receive even a thank-you note from Uncle Sam for returning a missing U.S. coin die.

"The U.S. Mint has had guys looking for those lost dies for 16 months," said dealer Ingrid K. Smith of Toronto. "I've given them one on a silver platter and now they're not even talking to me."

The die—used in making the "tails side" of a 1986 Statue of Liberty silver dollar—was one of 44 missing since May, 1986. They apparently disappeared in Canada during shipment from the Philadelphia Mint to the Royal Canadian Mint in Ottawa.

Dies for U.S. proof coins sometimes are sent to Canada for chrome plating and polishing—a laborious process—when the U.S. Mint encounters a production crunch.

Smith said she first saw the die at a Toronto coin show in mid-August, a few days before she was to travel to Atlanta for the American Numismatic Association convention.

"I was in shock when I first looked at the die," Smith said. "I traded some Canadian coins for it; I just wanted to get it off the market and turn it in." Possession of U.S. coin dies is illegal in this country because they can be used to make money.

"Dealer friends told me to stay away from the die, that it would be nothing but a headache," she added.

Smith took the die to Atlanta and, on Aug. 30, gave it to two Treasury Department employees who were attending the ANA convention. Since then, no Treasury official has contacted her nor has the Treasury offered to pay for her expenses in acquiring the die, she said.

Meanwhile, mint spokesman Michael J. Brown told a trade publication that recovery of the die is the first good lead the Treasury has had in the case. (Brown was unavailable for comment.)

● Two members of the Chicago Coin Club, Charles J. Ricard and Carl F. Wolf, won Numismatic Ambassador Awards last month at the ANA convention in Atlanta.